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**State of Vermont**  
**Vermont Department of Education**  
120 State Street  
Montpelier, VT 05620-2501

## **MEMORANDUM**

**To: All Interested Parties**  
**From: Rae Ann Knopf, Deputy Commissioner for Transformation and Innovation**  
**Re: Update on Vermont's Race to the Top Application**  
**Date: March 10, 2010**

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For the last five months, a team of approximately 20 individuals from the Department of Education (DOE) and 20 members of stakeholder groups have been working on the Vermont Race to the Top competitive grant application. Using Vermont's existing educational goals - to develop the next generation in education leadership, provide varied and relevant learning opportunities for our young people, prepare all Vermonters for college and careers of interest, and increase learning outcomes for our most disadvantaged children – the DOE is spearheading the development of a proposal that will position us to implement innovative strategies that work in low population rural states.

Race to the Top is a competitive funding opportunity being issued in two rounds through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). Vermont is applying in Round 2, with the potential to receive up to \$75 million over four years to support school and state efforts to realize the goals above. This is expected to be a highly competitive venture with probably only 10 states being funded by the end of the competition in September 2010. Most of the Race to the Top requirements are geared toward high population urban centers with graduation rates between 25-60 percent. With an average graduation rate of over 85%, Vermont will take a different approach, demonstrating that the strength of our educational outcomes lie in the breadth of school choice options for Vermonters and a long history of high standards for teaching and learning.

That being said, we know from recent New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) testing results that many of our children do not enjoy those outcomes. Many of our children continue to be highly disadvantaged economically and educationally. Our proposal will focus on increasing opportunities, supports, and expectations for those children. With a state goal of 100% graduation, it will take all Vermont educators providing high levels of instruction to help all of our young people to succeed.

The final push for completion of this competitive application will require hundreds more hours on the part of department staff to complete. Even then, winning the award is dependent on statewide support from superintendents, school boards and unions. We look forward to the possibility of bringing additional funds to the state based on an innovative approach grounded in the reality of rural education communities.